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INSIGHT ARTICLE

AFRICAPITALISM: A MANAGEMENT IDEA FOR BUSINESS IN AFRICA?

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The efforts to rethink the role of business in development, especially in developing countries, have facilitated the emergence of an array of concepts. Africapitalism – i.e. the private sector's commitment to the socio-economic development of Africa – proposed and championed by Mr. Tony O. Elumelu, is the most recent addition. While the idea of Africapitalism enables a creative space for rethinking business-society relationship from a development perspective in Africa, the failure to clarify what underpins the idea and how it differs from similar other western constructs potentially limits both its analytical and practical usefulness. This paper attempts to address this gap in the emerging literature by seeking to initiate a conversation around the set of values that might underpin the concept. It also explores the implications of Africapitalism for management in Africa.

Keywords: Africapitalism; business; development; Africa; social responsibility; management

Background

Africapitalism, a term coined by Mr Tony O. Elumelu CON – a Nigerian banker and economist – is an economic philosophy that embodies the private sector's commitment to the economic transformation of Africa through investments that generate both economic prosperity and social wealth. He argues that “Africa's renaissance lies in the confluence of the right business and political action”. The concept is fast becoming a buzzword in Africa and is expected to gain recognition even beyond the continent. It has continued to attract significant attention in both business and policy circles. For instance, on the invitation of a panel chaired by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon (April 9, 2014), Mr Elumelu shared his views on Africapitalism with the UN General Assembly and Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).¹ *The World in 2015*, one of the key publications of *The Economist* – a global and reputable media outlet – featured a piece on “The Rise of Africapitalism”.² The Tony Elumelu Foundation has also established the Africapitalism Institute³ as a research-based think tank to mainstream the understanding and practice of Africapitalism.

One of the projects funded by the Africapitalism Institute is the Edinburgh Project.⁴ The Edinburgh Project, amongst others, aims to rethink capitalism in Africa by focusing on the role of business leaders, investors, and entrepreneurs in Africa's development. It is a four-country study – Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa – with an

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international partnership involving nine universities: Pan Atlantic University – Lagos Business School (Nigeria); Strathmore Business School (Kenya); University of Loughborough; University of Nottingham; University of Durham (UK); York University (Canada); University of Cape Town (South Africa); and University of Grand-Bassam (Cote d'Ivoire); with the University of Edinburgh (UK) overseeing the entire project.

In this piece, we seek to provide insight into this concept, which, as explained above, has seen the birth of a dedicated institute and the commencement of a continent-wide research project. We link Africapitalism to the broader literature on business and society, and critically interrogate and explore it as a possible management idea for business in Africa in response to the onslaught of global capitalism. Coincidentally, the literature on the role of business in society often takes context for granted. When it takes context into consideration, it often adopts an (historical) institutional perspective, which tends to focus more on *why* firms behave the way they do rather than on *how* firms *ought* to behave, especially in weak institutional contexts. This neutrality, arguably, reflects a dominant paradigm within the social sciences, which have had enormous influence on the field of business in society scholarship. Stepping out of this neutrality, we argue that Africapitalism – i.e. the need for the private sector in Africa to commit to the socio-economic development of Africa (Elumelu, 2012) – is both an imaginative *management idea* and a creative moral-linguistic artifact, which embodies a new space for appropriating and re-moralizing capitalism in Africa. We situate Africapitalism in the broader conversation on global capitalism and highlight some of the salient principles that make it simultaneously an aspect of global capitalism but uniquely different in its situated contextualization. In so doing, we try to re-instate the sense of place and belongingness in the economic globalization discourse, as a form of economic patriotism, and argue that these comprise the quintessential distinctiveness of Africapitalism. We also highlight emerging issues for further research, and seek to ignite a continued discussion on this theme.

Introduction

Africa has a long checkered history of colonialism, bad governance, and poverty. In addition, the continent suffers from weak institutions and distressed civil societies. Resuscitating Africa from near economic and social collapse has continued to remain a thriving business for multinational institutions, foreign governments, aid agencies, international NGOs, and international donors. Regrettably, some of these actors have also proven to be Africa's Achilles' heel. The latest to arrive among this foray of helpers are multinational corporations, which often (are forced to) take on public responsibilities in the form of corporate social responsibility. Predictably, none of these has become the panacea to the many challenges confronting the continent (see Idemudia, 2014); rather, most of them continue to flounder at the margins. The crisis of 'development' in Africa and the failure of either the state or the market to deliver has in recent years led to a call for better collaboration and partnership among the state, business, and civil society, if developmental challenges in the region are to be addressed (see Garforth, Philips and Bhatia-Panthaki, 2007; Idemudia, 2014; Richey and Ponte, 2014).

While the 1980s and 1990s were generally seen as the 'lost decades' for development in most parts of the region, Africa is now supposedly on the rise (see *The Economist*, 2011, 2013; see also Carmody, 2008). This rise is largely driven by natural resources extraction, export of primary commodities, and the recent re-discovery of Africa as the last frontier of capitalism by the global market. This re-discovery and recognition has

been intensified in the wake of the global financial crisis. Implicated in this rise are entrepreneurs who push the boundaries and explore new and innovative opportunities in the continent. This emergence of successful African entrepreneurs has also contributed to the new narrative of Africa rising. Recognizing the power of the market for development and the key role of entrepreneurs as economic development change agents in unfettered markets, the nouveau economic elites in Africa have sort to engage with the sustainable development of the continent in a number of ways. One such attempt is the emergence of Africapitalism as a possible economic and management idea in Africa and beyond.

According to Elumelu (2012), Africapitalism is an idea that emphasizes the obligations of the private sector towards the socio-economic development of Africa and assumes the feasibility of such an undertaking. As an economic idea, it will require efficient economic coordination by diverse actors, such as the state, civil society, and markets. In order to do so, it will need to tap into the moral psychology of the actors (moral agents) and hypothesize human behaviors and needs. This may be contrary to the starting point of neoclassical economic thinking of the *homo economicus*, who is primarily driven by self-interest. Indeed, an Africapitalism perspective that is rooted in the values of Ubuntu sees the purpose of management as neither to benefit one *collection of individuals*, as the shareholder theory would suggest, nor to benefit many collections of individuals, as the stakeholder theory proposes. Instead, its purpose is to benefit the community, as well as the larger communities of which it is a part of (Lutz, 2009). As such, the *common good* becomes the principal target of managers (Lutz, 2009). This is an entirely different perspective and will have implications for how this business–society relationship is understood in Africa.

The significance of Africapitalism stems from both the enormity of the developmental and governance challenges confronting Africa (see Mbaku, 2004), and the fact that the continent requires a customized economic philosophy and business model that better allows it to meet its needs. This is particularly the case given what Ekeh (1990) has referred to as the ‘tyranny of borrowed paradigm’ in which African realities are either ignored in theoretical debates or made to fit into Western constructs. Consequently, while Lutz (2009) notes that theories that were created within and for individualistic cultures are often not at home within communal cultures, Blunt and Jones (1997) assert that Western approaches to management and leadership are often incompatible with the cultural context of Africa. Similarly, Zoogah (2008) has argued that there is a need for a contextualized approach to management theory that incorporates the African context, and the lived experience of its people in its theorizing and modeling (see also Edoho, 2001). In addition, Lutz (2009) suggested that such a theory is needed not only in the interest of moral integrity and social stability, but also in the interest of economic productivity.

After considering a variety of alternatives, Zoogah and Nkomo (2013) see research that is both strong in differentiating Africa and still highly similar to the West, i.e. that advocates for balanced identity, as the optimal space via which African management research can maintain its unique African identity while still contributing to global management theories. They assert that this is consistent with strategic balance theory, which suggests that a balance between differentiation and conformity leads to better outcomes. This is where Africapitalism comes in as a hybrid notion (i.e. a management idea – a ‘fairly stable bod[y] of knowledge about what managers ought to do’ [Kramer, 1975: 47]) that is potentially an alternative to the status quo. Africapitalism seeks to avoid cultural romanticism that seems to see African culture as the panacea to solve African problems and Western universalist discourse that ignores subtle contextual particularities by reasserting the sense of place, culture, and emotion in capitalism. However, if

Africapitalism is to be a meaningful idea and not to be conflated with other similar ideas (i.e. a CSResque phenomenon) and its true transformational potential are to be realized in terms of both management theory and practice in Africa, then there needs to be a clarification of its philosophical foundation and underpinning associative ideas.

It is against this background that this paper seeks to propose a series of associated ideas that might underpin the notion of Africapitalism as a basis for the socio-economic governance role of business and a management idea. It considers its implications for the business and society relationship in Africa. The paper starts by exploring the nature of global capitalism before dovetailing to the quintessential characteristics of Africapitalism as both a moral and a linguistic project.

GLOBAL CAPITALISM: PROSPECTS, PROBLEMS, AND PARADOXES

Capitalism is one of the most creative ingenuities of mankind. Arguably, capitalism as a mode of economic coordination is fundamentally anchored on the principles of freedom (liberty), individuality (self-interest), diligence (thrift and self-discipline), rights (private property), and equity (fairness). Where each of these fundamentals or a combination of them is out of kilter, capitalism limps, wobbles, and could become dangerously wild if unchecked. The recent global financial crisis, which has been described as a crisis of capitalism, is a case at hand. The different societal pathologies created by entrepreneurs and enterprises, for example global warming, labor exploitation, inequality, pollution, and human rights infringements, etc., are manifestations of unguarded capitalism. Nonetheless, capitalism in its completeness ought to be a benign force for good, driving human innovation for a progressive world.

In other words, capitalism is primarily a moral project, both as a process and as an outcome (Dunning, 2003, 2005, and 2008; Lundan, 2011; Judge et al., 2014), underpinned by a 'moral or ethical ecology' (Dunning, 2005: 138) or what Donaldson and Dunfee (1999) characterize as a set of 'hypernorms'. At the heart of capitalism is the moral question of 'what is produced, in what ways it is produced, and who benefits from the goods (and bads) created' (Dunning, 2005: 136). Reinforcing the moral foundation of capitalism, Novak (1982: 56) argues that 'each age of capitalism requires its own specific moral culture which nurtures the virtues and values on which its existence depends'. Unfortunately, '[f]or too long capitalism, its institutions and morality have been kept separate from each other' (Dunning, 2005:149) and the resultant successes and failures of capitalism have been treated as matters of mere technicalities (Hayek, 1979).

Notwithstanding, capitalism has strong cultural influences and undertones (Hall and Soskice, 2001). The European form of capitalism is different from the Anglo-Saxon variant. While the former is socially oriented, the latter is very economic in outlook and orientation. These varieties are informed by distinct socio-cultural philosophies. The emergence of capitalism in China, for instance, has its uniqueness given the role of the state in furthering economic advancement. What are today seen as mere expressions of markets, are historical products of well-articulated socio-political philosophies. In most advanced capitalist societies, the state is very instrumental to the shaping of the different forms of capitalism existing in these societies. For instance, French capitalism is different from both UK and German forms of capitalism (Kang and Moon, 2012). Capitalism in these countries is a function of historical and cultural antecedents leading to what has been characterized as a 'methodological national' (Smith, 1979) approach to the study of capitalism. As Offe (2003) states:

If there is anything distinctive about the 'European' model of capitalism, it is the insight, congealed in a myriad of economic institutions and regulatory arrangements, that the interest of 'all of us' will be served well if the pursuit of the interest of 'each of us' is to some extent constrained by categorical status rights. (Offe, 2003: 444)

Nonetheless, the study of capitalism assumes strong institutional contexts and actors – for example, strong governments, civil society, and effective or efficient regulations and governance. However, nation-states and governments in Africa are weak. This weakness makes it difficult for the states and governments to play effectively the roles of protecting lives and properties, as well as ensuring social well-being, infrastructure development, and the development of enabling institutions for the production and consumption of goods and services within Africa. In addition and unfortunately, the benefits of capitalism are unevenly, some may say unjustly, distributed partly due to structural and power imbalances in the global polity and partly as a result of weak local (national) governance systems. Capitalism requires effective government, market, and civil society, to yield good societal outcomes. Where one or more of these are missing, the tendency of capitalism leading to societal pathologies is magnified. Thus, reflecting on the benevolence and malevolence of capitalism, Dunning (2005: 138) writes:

I would assert that capitalism, although possibly the best economic system currently known to man to create wealth, is sub-optimal. In its current state, it is perceived to result in, or continue to allow, an unacceptable level of poverty and social injustice, insufficient participation and a lack of democracy. It is also frequently associated with corporate malfeasance, misuse of economic and political power by governments, and a cavalier attitude by supranational entities towards environmental, security and cultural related issues. (Dunning, 2005: 138)

Consequently, Newell (2008) stated that we are now at a critical cross-roads where we must choose between a laissez-faire approach to capitalism and regulated capitalism that would serve broader social and environmental goals such as social justice and sustainability. In response, those that accept the realities of economic globalization and liberalization on ideological grounds, as well as on the market efficiency arguments, have called for capitalism with a human face as a strategy to deal with the contradictions of capitalism (Leisinger, 2007). For instance, while Bill Gates has called for creative capitalism,⁵ drawing on his notion of embedded liberalism, John Ruggie has also suggested principled pragmatism (United Nations, 2006). In contrast, proponents of regulated capitalism argue that economic globalization and liberalization have altered the balance of rights and obligations that structure corporate behavior (Chang, 2001). Indeed, while firms now enjoy an enormous amount of freedom and protection of their rights essentially secured by what Stephen Gill has labeled as the 'new constitutionalism' (Gill, 2003), there seem to be a commensurate decline in their responsibility and obligations to society at large. These scholars thus argue that self-regulation, as espoused in the laissez-faire approach to capitalism, is likely not to deliver in addressing the contradictions of capitalisms without stronger regulations (see Newell, 2001, 2008; Utting, 2005, 2008; O'Laughlin, 2008). However, McBarnet (2007) has also pointed out that the corporate accountability movement may be asking more of law than the law can deliver, as corporations are very adept at circumventing regulatory control and creatively complying with the law.

This laissez-faire approach to capitalism versus the regulated capitalism debate has been particularly insightful, especially as it highlights the strengths and limitations of both

sides of the debate. However, Crouch (2010) points out that the unintended consequence of this debate has been the tendency to neglect business as a fundamental institution in socio-economic governance. He argues that it is 'essential that analysis of policy and politics of development takes full account of giant corporations as a form of governance in its own right'. This is because, in the present context, the corporate hierarchies of big business are in fact a major source of governance that rivals both the state and the market and thus there is a need for attention to turn to the role of the firm as a political actor rather than simply being an entity to be regulated by public policy (Crouch, 2010). It is therefore not surprising that in the context of Africa the discourse of Africapitalism has recently emerged as one way of engaging with the potential socio-economic governance role that business can play in Africa's development. This is particularly important given that the discussions concerning the changing role of business in development in Africa are only just emerging (see Idemudia, 2014). However, while recent works (see Geelhoed, Samhoud and Smolders, 2014; Anyansi-Archibong and Ayansi, 2014; Carney and Freeland, 2014) on Africapitalism have been insightful, they have either tended to conflate it with other similar ideas like philanthro-capitalism and thus undermine the innovative fresh perspective that the notion can bring to the analysis of the business and society relationship in Africa (e.g. Anyansi-Archibong and Anyansi, 2014) or use it in an unspecified manner that belies its transformative possibilities.

AFRICAPITALISM AS AN IMAGINATIVE MORAL-LINGUISTIC PROJECT

Africapitalism is an attempt to re-imagine entrepreneurship and reunite capitalism with its moral roots in Africa. The paper takes the commitment of Africapitalism seriously and considers the necessary principles or values foundational to such a commitment. It identifies four such possible principles as sense of peace, sense of progress, sense of parity, and sense of place, which are arguably rooted in the Ubuntu worldview. In that regard, Africapitalism implies the restoration of African-ness in capitalism, reflecting the economic and social practices implicit in African culture and tradition. To realize its goals, Africapitalism must bring its moral intuitions and principled commitments into alignment with modern economic practices. Here, the notion of Ubuntu⁶ or African traditional humanism comes to mind. In economic terms, it is a kind of humanism that does not proscribe self-enrichment, but requires the affluent to improve their community (Lutz, 2009; Littrell et al., 2013). In this kind of voluntary wealth distributism, one's economic and social power is measured in his or her economic empowerment of others.

Thus, if self-identity in the traditional Africa is a relational and transactional category, then a person is a creative articulation of his or her individuality within the matrix of the social community. In a very fundamental sense, the community shapes identity. As such, an Africapitalism perspective sees the firm not as a mere collection of individuals but as a community (MCFarlin et al. 1999; Karstern and Illa, 2005). "In a community the individual does not pursue the common good *instead* of his or her own good; rather pursues his or her own good *through pursuing* the common good" (Lutz, 2009, 314). This is because the values of Ubuntu are able to hold the paradox of individual and community in dynamic and interdependent tension by proposing the abrogation of the twin dangers of the subjugation of the individual to the collective, and the detached superordinacy of the individual (Ntibagiriw, 2003 as cited in Littrell, Nkomo, Wanasika, Howell and Dorfman, 2013). Hence, drawing on Ubuntu's emphasis on group solidarity and relationship building, Africapitalism offers an alternative corporate culture that allows firms to strive

for profit-making, but not the sort of profit-making at all costs that allows for the exploitation of human beings because the ultimate goal of self-enrichment is to use it for the improvement of the community (Prinsloo, 2000; Lutz, 2009). At its core, the values of Ubuntu that might underpin the notion of Africapitalism include respect for the dignity of others, group solidarity, participation, sharing, the spirit of harmony, and interdependency (see Makhudu, 1993; Mbigi, 2002). As such, we see the following four points as the cardinal values of Africapitalism: (1) sense of progress and prosperity, (2) sense of parity, (3) sense of peace and harmony, and (4) sense of place and belongingness.

1. Sense of Progress and Prosperity

Africapitalism is predicated on the creation of social wealth in addition to the pursuit of financial profitability. Wrapped around both social wealth and financial profitability is a sense of progress and prosperity, which goes beyond just material accumulation and also includes psycho-social human well-being. In that regard, progress and prosperity are not just the absence of poverty, but the presence of conditions that make life more fulfilling (e.g. access to quality education, health, social capital, democratic institutions, etc.) (Brundtland, 1994). Accordingly Brundtland (1994: 57) stated that:

Prosperity is more than the absence of poverty, pressing though that is. It means addressing sustainable development and careful husbandry of the world's resources, while recognising the rights of developing countries to break out from poverty. It means addressing population growth which leads to famine, destabilisation and war. It means quality of life achieved through education, employment, social justice and social security ... true world prosperity will remain a distant goal unless we pursue policies based on the concept of global solidarity.

This sense of progress and prosperity is nowhere needed more than in Africa, which is riddled by extreme negative human conditions.

2. Sense of Parity

The benefits of progress and prosperity need to be equitably shared. It is very easy for the accumulation of wealth to be lopsided. Most liberal economies have also led to high inequality (Piketty, 2014). Inequality has become the new scourge and burden of success and the new poverty. Inequality in Africa is not necessarily created by liberalism, but by the absence of it and the entrenchment of crony capitalism and corruption. Africapitalism is driven by a counter-current of progressivism, which recognizes that growth needs to be inclusive. In other words, it promotes a form of entrepreneurship that strives to create financial and social wealth for all stakeholders and not just for the shareholders.

3. Sense of Peace and Harmony

Capitalism can be very innovative, and at the heart of contemporary capitalism is the Schumpeterian quest for creative destruction. Framed as such, capitalism presents an arena of continuous struggle and contestations between the incumbents and the emergent; between old and new regimes; and between places and spaces. This quest for creative destruction is often underpinned by the logic of self-interest (Adam Smith), which creates enormous rewards for firms and entrepreneurs, and has been proven to be one of the best drivers of entrepreneurial activities. Yet it is riddled with imperfections – e.g. excessive inequality and market failure (Crouch, 2011).

The quest for *investments that generate both economic prosperity and social wealth*, which is at the heart of Africapitalism, is a quest for balance, harmony and peace. It is a recognition of the tendency of liberal market capitalism to lead to some form of socio-environmental imbalance, which is often dangerous to humanity. This sense of balance, which is expressed as the balance between economic prosperity and social wealth, could be further stretched to include the need to create a balance of the impacts of consumption and production on the ecology, environment, society, and economy. In this regard, Africapitalism shares similar values of balance and harmony with the sustainability movement (Schwartz and Carroll, 2008), which could be summed up as the quest for peace and security: “a process of achieving human development ... in an *inclusive, connected, equitable, prudent, and secure* manner” (Gladwin et al., 1995: 878 – emphasis in the original). Africapitalism is also underpinned by a stakeholder orientation in so far as it not only sees the creation of private wealth in the form of profits for shareholders, but strives to create social wealth for all stakeholders. It is a re-enactment of the modern management philosophy of harmony and balance (Kramer, 1975).

4. Sense of Place and Belongingness

The sense of place and belongingness is at the heart of the Africapitalism agenda. It is a direct response to globalized capitalism, which often takes place for granted and prioritizes cost instead. Since place is taken for granted and cost is prioritized, it is easy to outsource and for capital to follow the least cost-tolerant path. Arguably, therefore, globalization trivializes place and promotes placelessness. It reduces place to mere resources to the extent that the economic value of a place determines its place in the scheme of things. Place is consumed. Place is fluid. Globalization reduces place to space, which, according to Gieryn (2000: 465), “is what place becomes when the unique gathering of things, meanings, and values are sucked out”. Lamenting on the impact of globalization on place, Escobar (2001) wrote:

Place has dropped out of sight in the “globalization craze” of recent years, and this erasure of place has profound consequences for our understanding of culture, knowledge, nature, and economy. It is perhaps time to reverse some of this asymmetry by focusing anew – and from the perspective afforded by the critiques of place themselves – on the continued vitality of place and place-making for culture, nature, and economy. (Escobar, 2001: 141)

The focus on cost and not place renders the global economic order placeless, and this placelessness has implications for managerial framing of costs and opportunities. As such, Africapitalism is underpinned by the value of sense of place and rootedness (Tuan, 1977). It strives to restore in managerial decision-making the link between place and economics on one hand, and between place and self-identity on the other hand. Economic transactions are emplaced in place, and place is intrinsically bound with self for “there is no place without self and no self without place” (Casey, 2001: 684). In other words, Africapitalism becomes an expression of *topophilia* (Tuan, 1974) – “the effective bond between people and place” (Duncan and Duncan, 2001: 41).

The sense of place and belongingness can also manifest as an expression of patriotism, which “attributes an intrinsic moral value to the defence of the homeland, even if it does not specify its boundaries” (Clift and Woll, 2012: 314) and “entails a significant degree of loyalty to one’s country and an associated disposition to take pride in it, to be subject to emotions closely connected with one’s perception of its well-being,

and to give some degree of preference to its needs and interests over the needs and interests of other countries (Audi, 2009: 367–368). Within the context of Africapitalism, this expression of patriotism could be classified as a form of economic patriotism, which suggests “that economic choices should be linked with concerns for one’s homeland” (Clift and Woll, 2012: 308). In this case, the focus of Africapitalism on Africa is not arbitrary since, “economic patriotism, like economic nationalism, needs to be defined by its territorial references and its underlying conception of political economic space, not by its supposed policy content” (Clift and Woll, 2012: 308). And at the firm level, it could lead to corporate patriotism: “those forms of corporate behaviour which contribute to the national welfare of citizens and elicit the supportive behaviour of consumers and other stakeholders” (Puncheva-Michelotti, McColl, Vocino and Michelotti, 2014: 1–2). As such, Africapitalism is, arguably, an exercise in, and an acceptance of, economic and political pragmatism given that: “economic patriotism is a universal phenomenon endemic within interdependent markets and economic jurisdictions” (Clift and Woll, 2012: 309).

As a linguistic project, Africapitalism jolts conventional wisdom and repositions the development of Africa in the world firmly as an indigenous project in which Africans will play significant, active roles. We see this glimmer of audacious hope across the continent, whether engaging with business leaders in Lagos, Nairobi, Accra, or Johannesburg. The message and the sentiments it evokes are unique. The emotive power of Africapitalism is not necessarily a new phenomenon in economic history. Economic patriotism and nationalism played significant roles in the rebuilding of Western Europe after World War II, for instance. The same could be seen in the contemporary rise of China as an economic world power. This highlights the view that economic development is both a rational and an emotional project. As such, the resurgence of the behavioral perspective on economics and finance in the wake of the recent global financial crisis is not surprising. The behavioral turn emphasizes the role of emotions, sentiments, and sometimes crass irrationality in the rational person of neoclassical economics – including entrepreneurs. And herein lies the distinctiveness of Africapitalism as a powerful emotional economic tool for Africa’s sustainable development. Since “To live is to live locally, and to know is first of all is to know the places one is in” (Casey, 1996: 18), the emotive force of Africapitalism, which is embedded in the sense of place and belongingness, lends it the ability to connect with the African identity in a way that is not easily reflected in the broad view of capitalism. In addition to the underpinning values of Africapitalism highlighted above, the concept is also an emotive linguistic project.

EMERGING ISSUES AND FUTURE RESEARCH

First, it is important to emphasize that what this paper seeks to achieve is merely to point out the foundational ideas that might underpin the notion of Africapitalism and not an attempt to establish an Africapitalism theory of management. Hence, there are three main emerging issues. First, clarifying these foundational issues stems from the fact that Africapitalism shares the ethos of *doing good to do well* like other similar ideas such as corporate social responsibility, corporate citizenship, bottom of the pyramid, and triple bottom line. Yet, Africapitalism is sufficiently different from these concepts in the sense that while these concepts attempt to address the problems with owner-wealth maximization theories of the firm without addressing the root of the problem (i.e. individualism) (Lutz, 2009), Africapitalism takes on this challenge by suggesting that the firm can be seen as a community (i.e. sense of belongingness) rooted in a sense of place.

Consequently, Africapitalism creates a space to challenge what Blowfield (2005) has labeled the “the non-negotiable value of capitalism”, which concepts such as CSR or corporate citizenship take for granted. The implication thus is that although Africapitalism might share the ameliorative potential of concepts like CSR or philanthropy, it is much more because it potentially offers a transformative agenda.

Second, by reasserting the role of *place* and *emotion* in capitalism, Africapitalism offers an alternative basis for the socio-economic governance role of business that goes beyond the often limited business-case argument that seems to underpin many of the other concepts in the field of business and society. Crucial here is the fact that Africapitalism is not just an African-only project; rather it is a technology that is inclusive of different agents and actors that share the emotional attachment to the place. Third, the discrepancy between traditional African cultures and theories taught to African managers and future managers remains a serious problem (Lutz, 2009). Similarly, Zogah (2008) has also pointed out that it has been suggested that Africans lack the confidence to generate meaningful, significant, and unique management knowledge. Africapitalism offers a potential space to begin to address these challenges.

There is thus the need to further clarify what Africapitalism might mean as a *management idea* (Kramer, 1975; Birkinshaw, Hamel, and Mol 2008) in practice and the need to formulate hypotheses that can be tested using empirical data. This paper is an attempt to spark a debate in this area. There is a need for other scholars with an interest in Africa to join the debate and subject the concept to more rigorous analyses that might spur further innovation.

CONCLUSION

Africapitalism is capitalism by Africa-oriented entrepreneurs for Africa. It allows for a space to re-appropriate the discourse of capitalism in a manner that puts Africa, its culture, and its people front and center of any possibility of capitalist development in the region. Articulated as such, it comes across as a force for good. It is a creative way of unmasking the good face of capitalism in a continent it set its back on for a long time now. It is a novel way of domesticating and unleashing the power of capitalism in Africa. It is a concept that can easily unleash the emotive imagination of Africans and refocus their minds on what it means to be African in Africa. In that regard, Africapitalism becomes an expression of economic patriotism.

Africapitalism is a creative push back against the disadvantages of globalization. It is an entrepreneurial quest and mindset, which challenges the conventional win–lose mentality of entrepreneurs and businesses in Africa to create shared value instead (i.e. win–win outcomes), in and for Africa. The idea of capturing national governments for personal gains, which seems rather prevalent in the continent, is anachronistic, unfair to the African society, and ultimately unsustainable. Economic patriotism, which is at the core of Africapitalism, is unashamedly good for Africa, and should be promoted within and for the continent.

Africapitalism without a strong philosophy behind it runs the risk of being hollow and ungrounded. Entrepreneurs and firms are at the very heart of capitalism. Any change in the way capitalism runs today should involve entrepreneurs and firms. For Africapitalism to succeed, it needs to permeate the entrepreneurial mind-set and boardrooms. Given its normative base, it also needs supporting governance mechanisms to attain this. Africapitalism requires Africa-consciousness, a form of reimagined Afrocentricism, which places the

interests of Africa and Africans at the epicenter of business decisions, and will guide Africa's renaissance. Africonsconsciousness is a socio-mental awareness of Africa, putting Africans before the market. The sudden characterization of the continent as the last frontier of capitalism bears the hallmarks of the exploitative form of capitalism, which will not be good for the continent. Africonsconsciousness helps to neutralize the onslaught of globalization and redirects the positive energy of capitalism in Africa to meet the genuine development needs of African people.

However, Africapitalism can only thrive in a politically stable and environmentally sustainable Africa. It should be open to the natural and unnatural contingencies of the modern market; it should also be robust enough to carve a separate and distinct niche for itself in the face of globalization and globalized Western capitalist market structures. Furthermore, Africapitalism can be both secular and non-secular in orientation. It can be informed by the ethos of both indigenous and non-indigenous religions in Africa. Notwithstanding, it behooves African entrepreneurs to work creatively with the different governments to achieve this goal. This is where responsible business–government relations become a critical strategic option for businesses in Africa. Yet, Africapitalism can potentially serve as the common discourse for collective action and a space to redress the imbalance in management research and theory on Africa. This is particularly important given that Zoogah and Nkomo (2013) have pointed out how the predominance of Western epistemology in the production of management knowledge regarding Africa has led to the exclusion of African voices.

Notes

1. <http://www.heirsholdings.com/tonyelumelu/tony-elumelu-addresses-the-un-general-assembly>
2. <http://www.economist.com/news/21631956-entrepreneurs-will-transform-africa-says-tony-elumelu-chairman-heirs-holdings-and>
3. <http://www.tonyelumelufoundation.org/africapitalisminstitute/>
4. <http://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk/blogs/research-news/2014/09/22/africapitalism-african-business-leaders-and-africas-development/>
5. Through which businesses, especially the big ones, can improve the lot of the poor by better aligning their self-interest with the good of society (O'Laughlin, 2008).
6. Ubuntu is simultaneously the foundation and edifice of African philosophy and its direct relevance to management theory and practice has been covered extensively in the literature (see Lutz, 2009; Prinsloo, 2000; Mbigi and Maree, 1995; Mbigi, 2002; and Karsten and Illa, 2005).

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